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United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report provides an overview of the activities of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean during the period from July 2012 to June 2013.

During the reporting period, the Regional Centre provided support to Member States in implementing international and regional disarmament instruments through over 70 assistance initiatives. The activities focused on assisting States in their efforts to combat the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons and to address negative impact of small arms and light weapons on public safety and human security. The assistance provided to States of the region resulted in the destruction of 41,167 weapons and 51 tons of ammunition, and enhanced capacity-building in the management and safeguarding of 130 stockpile facilities throughout the region. The Centre trained more than 430 national security sector officials, including customs and judicial officers, on a wide range of small arms control matters, including marking, tracing and stockpile management. The Centre also supported public policy dialogue on small arms control and legislative reforms in 13 States, resulting in the development of national policies, regulations and national action plans. The Centre provided legal expertise on the implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, and on the establishment of national agencies and bodies responsible for its oversight. The Centre mainstreamed women's issues in its programme of work and made concerted efforts to promote the participation of women and to highlight their contribution to disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation in the Latin American and Caribbean region.

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The Secretary-General wishes to express his gratitude to the Member States and other partners that supported the Regional Centre's operation and programmes with financial and in-kind contributions, and calls upon those in a position to do so to make voluntary contributions to the Centre.

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 67/66, the General Assembly reiterated its strong support for the role of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean in the promotion of United Nations activities at the regional and subregional levels to strengthen peace, disarmament, stability, security and development among its Member States, and encouraged the Centre to further develop activities in all countries of the region in the important areas of peace and disarmament, and development.

2. In the same resolution, the General Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on the implementation of the resolution at its sixty-eighth session. The present report, submitted pursuant to that request, covers the activities of the Regional Centre from July 2012 to June 2013. A financial statement on the status of the Trust Fund for the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean in 2012 is contained in the annex to the report.

II. Functioning and mandate

3. The United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, located in Lima, was established in 1987, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 41/60 J. The Regional Centre is mandated to provide, upon request, substantive support for the initiatives and other activities of the Member States in the region for the implementation of measures for peace and disarmament and for the promotion of economic and social development.

III. Main areas of activities

4. Illicit weapons circulating throughout the region continue to wreak havoc on the safety of communities and impede the sustainable development of Latin American and Caribbean States. In response to the transnational nature of this public security challenge, States in the region have favoured subregional approaches and mechanisms to implement relevant disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation instruments. The Regional Centre's technical expertise and assistance has been sought in efforts to achieve that goal. The Regional Centre has supported States in their review of national firearms legislation and the adoption of public policies to address the proliferation of illicit small arms, thus helping them mitigate a rise in armed violence. With a view to assisting in the implementation of international and regional small arms instruments, the Centre has developed new practical disarmament tools to standardize marking practices for Andean States, build tracing capacities in Central America, establish stockpile management capabilities in the Caribbean and provide legal and policy guidance in South American States.

5. Recognizing the important role of women in disarmament, the Centre highlighted the role of women in Latin America and the Caribbean as forces of change through a publication devoted to their contribution to the implementation of the 2001 Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

A. Public security programme

1. Technical assistance in weapons and ammunition destruction, and stockpile management

6. By providing technical assistance, specialized training and destruction equipment, the Regional Centre supported States in their destruction of surplus, obsolete and confiscated weapons, in compliance with international instruments and norms, such as the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

7. The Regional Centre launched the second phase of its Caribbean assistance programme at a regional workshop held in Barbados on best practices and international standards for stockpile management and destruction. Five other Caribbean States participated in the second phase, which includes baseline assessments of stockpile policies and facilities. The assessment was conducted in Barbados (October 2012), Saint Kitts and Nevis (October 2012), Suriname (February 2013) and Guyana (June 2013), with the final assessment planned for Dominica in late 2013. The baseline assessments provided the States with objective information on their national capacities to destroy weapons and to manage stockpiles. The Centre also assisted the States in developing national action plans for stockpile management and weapons destruction.

8. In order to support adherence by States to internationally accepted technical norms for weapons destruction and stockpile management, the Centre developed 40 standard operating procedures, which are based on the International Small Arms Control Standards and international ammunition technical guidelines, which can be adapted to each State's particular administrative and operational systems. The standard operating procedures guide States on how best to manage weapons inventories, record the loss or recovery of weapons, assess risks and comply with security requirements during destructions and waste disposal options following destructions. During the reporting period, the standard operating procedures developed by the Centre were implemented throughout the Caribbean region and in Argentina.

Small arms destruction

9. The Regional Centre provided practical technical guidance to national officials in 13 Caribbean and South American States in the destruction of 41,167 surplus, obsolete and confiscated small arms. The Centre monitored the destruction processes and ensured that international standards were followed since national destruction measures and techniques may vary. In the Caribbean region, where smelting facilities are not readily available, the Centre opted to provide hydraulic shears to all Caribbean States. The initial five Caribbean States to receive the equipment during the reporting period were Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Guyana, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and Suriname. A total of 71 national officials were trained on international procedures for documenting, planning, implementing and monitoring small arms destruction operations. Training on the safe use and maintenance of the cutting equipment was also provided to ensure sustainability of weapons destruction capabilities.

10. The Dominican Republic serves as a significant example of the success of the programme provided by the Regional Centre. Following an assessment carried out

during the previous reporting period, national authorities, with the assistance of the Regional Centre, destroyed over 30,200 surplus, obsolete and confiscated small arms and over 30 tons of small arms and light weapons ammunition from military and police stockpiles. The destruction equipment provided by the Centre was instrumental in the effective destruction of those weapons.

Small arms and light weapons ammunition destruction

11. Pursuant to the recommendation on ammunition made by the Group of Governmental Experts[1] in its report (A/63/182, para. 69), to the effect that States should conduct the destruction of unsafe ammunition in a timely and environmentally benign manner, the Regional Centre designed and commissioned a reusable small arms ammunition burning tank. A total of 108 officials were trained and certified on the use of the burning tank in nine Central American and Caribbean States (Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago), as well as on ammunition destruction in general.

12. During the reporting period, the Regional Centre assisted States in the destruction of a total of 51 tons of small arms and light weapons ammunition. All destructions were conducted and overseen in line with international standards and the international ammunition technical guidelines.

Stockpile management

13. Stockpile management is essential to improving the safety and security of weapons stockpiles and is therefore an important component in combating illicit trafficking in small arms, light weapons and their ammunition. Member States serve to benefit from assistance to improve the infrastructure of stockpile facilities, to develop safer procedures and to destroy surplus, obsolete or seized weapons, thus mitigating the potential threat of accidental stockpile explosions and weapons diversion into the black market. The Regional Centre has received numerous requests for assistance on the issue from Member States of the region.

14. The Regional Centre provided training to a number of security sector personnel responsible for managing small arms and ammunition stockpile facilities in Argentina and the Dominican Republic, enabling them to share their acquired technical know-how with their colleague officers through a "training the trainers" programme in order to ensure the application of standardized practices. Over 100 stockpile facilities in the region have benefited from the assistance provided by the Centre in that regard.

15. The Regional Centre also organized a seminar in El Salvador in July 2012 for 25 national experts and a regional seminar in Costa Rica in January 2013 for 34 technical experts from member States of the Central American Integration System, Colombia and Mexico. The seminars focused on weapons and ammunition destruction and stockpile management standards and best practices.

16. The Regional Centre provided technical assistance to Argentina in August 2012 on stockpile management, including a technical workshop on stockpile

[1] By its resolution 61/72, the General Assembly established the Group of Governmental Experts to consider further steps to enhance cooperation with regard to the issue of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus.

management for national authorities and baseline assessments of 11 federal stockpiles facilities. A training seminar was held in November 2012 for 30 officials from federal law enforcement agencies on stockpile management risk assessment and security planning. In May 2013, the Government of Argentina and the Regional Centre jointly inaugurated the renovated and improved main stockpile facility of the Argentine Federal Police. The Centre made recommendations on improvements, based on international standards.

17. Argentina financially supported the joint effort, which provided technical assistance to its national authorities. This represented a new modality under which the States of the region collaborate and financially support national activities undertaken by the Regional Centre in addressing the challenges of controlling small arms and light weapons.

2. Capacity-building and training on combating small arms trafficking

Inter-institutional law enforcement training

18. The Regional Centre has been successfully implementing its award-winning inter-institutional training course for security sector officers on combating illicit trafficking in firearms, ammunition and explosives. The course contributed to building the capacities of Latin American and Caribbean States to implement the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, as well as related regional instruments.

19. During the reporting period, over 200 security sector officers from five States in Central and South America, and the Caribbean (Belize, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador and Honduras) participated in the training.

20. In addition, the Regional Centre, in cooperation with Colombia and Ecuador, and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) country offices, conducted a specialized binational course in July 2012 at the border between the two countries. The course served as a confidence-building measure between the two countries, which experience similar challenges in respect of their borders. The majority of the 43 trainees operate in border zones and received training on such issues as illicit trafficking in arms and the impact of that trafficking on the border zone; techniques for the investigation and tracing of illicit small arms in border areas; and information-gathering and judicial evidence management.

21. Pursuant to Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and General Assembly resolution 65/69, and in recognition of the critical role that women play in disarmament and arms control issues, the Regional Centre encouraged States to nominate as many female security sector officers as possible to take part in its inter-institutional training course in order to ensure the increased representation and involvement of women in peace and security efforts.

22. The Regional Centre also stressed national ownership and sustainability in respect of the course by training the trainers so that the latter would replicate the course at the national level. Acquiring national capacities to conduct similar training contributed to the decision by El Salvador, and Trinidad and Tobago to incorporate the Centre's inter-institutional course modules into the standard curricula of the training centres for their respective national security forces.

Specialized capacity-building for the judicial sector

23. In response to requests from States for a specific training for judges, prosecutors and judicial police on combating the illicit trafficking in firearms, ammunition and explosives, the Regional Centre adapted the inter-institutional course accordingly. The long-term aim is to provide the judicial sector with better tools to address the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, through, inter alia, helping to reduce impunity and armed violence.

24. Two specialized courses for judicial officers and legal practitioners were held in Guatemala (September 2012) and El Salvador (October 2012). A total of 29 judicial officers and 33 legal practitioners benefited from the course, which provided training on the technical aspects of firearms and ammunition control, including ballistic information, crime scene management and chain of custody, as well as a simulation of a hearing on illicit trafficking in small arms. It is important to note that 37 per cent of the participants of the two legal training courses were women.

3. Legal assistance and policy support on small arms control

25. Robust policy and legal frameworks are fundamental to strengthening the fight against the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, and represent key components of the enforcement of related laws. Assisting States in aligning their national legislation on controlling small arms and light weapons with their obligations under international and regional instruments is of particular importance.

Public security policy seminars

26. The Regional Centre organized a national seminar in Guatemala in September 2012 on regional best practices in developing control of small arms and light weapons and national policies on armed violence prevention. A total of 26 senior-level Guatemalan policymakers, as well as the technical secretariat of the Guatemalan National Security Council, participated in the seminar. The seminar supported the Government's reassessment of its institutional framework for addressing the issues of trafficking in small arms and light weapons, and armed violence. The seminar contributed to the creation in April 2013 of a national commission on armed violence prevention.

27. The Regional Centre also supported a policy seminar on the control of small arms and light weapons in El Salvador, which was held in the country in October 2012 and at which a number of legislators and parliamentarians discussed current national legal frameworks and policy on armed violence reduction.

28. The Regional Centre collaborated with the Honduras National Secretary of Public Security and the UNDP country office in organizing a high-level policy discussion seminar in November 2012. Some 76 participants from the Government, civil society and international organizations assessed armed violence at the national and regional levels, policy options, including control measures in respect of small arms and light weapons, and initiatives on armed violence prevention and reduction. The seminar also addressed ways to improve the capacity of States to combat illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons; to reduce homicide rates; and to improve public security.

Legal assistance related to small arms

29. In response to a request from Honduras, the Regional Centre conducted a legal study and provided recommendations on measures to align the national law related to small arms and light weapons with international and regional legal instruments. The legal study was officially presented to national authorities at a workshop organized by the Centre in cooperation with the Honduran Centre for Research and Promotion of Human Rights in February 2013. At the workshop, 62 participants, including members of Congress and key senior officials, discussed the main components of a new bill on small arms and light weapons, and the recommendations contained in legal study undertaken by the Regional Centre. The new bill has since been approved by the Ministry of Security and Defence and is currently before Congress for consideration.

30. Upon the request of El Salvador, the Regional Centre carried out a comparative legal study on that country's legislation on small arms and light weapons vis-à-vis international and regional legal instruments. The study contained recommendations to strengthen control in El Salvador of small arms and light weapons. The Centre organized a workshop to present the comparative legal study in July 2012. A total of 16 Salvadoran policymakers and legislators participated in the workshop. In order to promote South-South cooperation, legal experts from Guatemala and Nicaragua were invited to share their national experiences in that area at the workshop.

31. During the reporting period, the Regional Centre also undertook legal studies for the following 10 Caribbean States, upon their request: Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Suriname. Through the legal studies, the respective national legislations on the control of small arms and light weapons were compared with the provisions set out in relevant international and regional legal instruments, and gaps, if any, were identified. Recommendations were also provided on how to align national legislations with existing international and regional legal instruments.

32. The Regional Centre expanded its online legal reference tools with the creation of a virtual library, in order to include the various national legislations in Latin American and Caribbean States related to small arms and light weapons. The legal studies undertaken by the Regional Centre for countries in the region are also available on its website.

4. Tools to implement instruments on small arms and light weapons

33. The Regional Centre has developed specific tools for the security sector officials of the countries of the region in order to enhance capacity to combat illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons. During the reporting period, the Regional Centre provided technical assistance to the countries, upon their request, in such areas as the marking of weapons and ammunition, and developed new training courses for armourers and forensic ballistics experts.

Standardized marking practices

34. The Regional Centre developed regional technical guidelines on marking small arms and light weapons and ammunition, based on the International Small Arms

Control Standards and regional best practices. The guidelines consist of a series of recommendations for standardized primary and secondary markings of weapons and their ammunition. They were provided to the countries of the region and presented at the preparatory meeting of the second regional operation on combating arms trafficking, held in San Salvador in April 2013, and at the consultative committee meetings of the Inter-American Convention Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials, held in Washington, D.C., in April 2013.

35. The Regional Centre contributed to Andean Community efforts to standardize marking practices. Drawing from the technical guidelines developed by the Centre, Andean States discussed the adoption of a legally binding technical regulation to standardize the marking of arms and ammunition in the subregion at a meeting held in Lima in December 2012. The Regional Centre will continue to support the ongoing subregional consultative process of Andean States, with a view to adopting the first subregional instrument on standardized marking practices.

Tracing and forensic ballistics

36. In response to requests from Belize for assistance in tracing small arms and light weapons and ammunition through the use of forensic ballistic evidence, the Regional Centre conducted a specialized training course on operational forensic ballistics for Belizean officials in March 2013. The four-day training course provided technical training to 22 officials on crime scene management of ballistic evidence, forensic examination of small arms and light weapons and ammunition, recording and reporting, comparison macroscopy and residue tests for small arms and light weapons. The training course can be adapted and provided to other countries in the Latin American and Caribbean region upon request.

Armoury management

37. Responding to assistance requests, the Regional Centre, in collaboration with the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, jointly established a regional armoury training centre in Port of Spain. The Regional Centre also organized a national armoury management course based on international standards, including the International Small Arms Control Standards and international ammunition technical guidelines, in Trinidad and Tobago in June 2013. Twelve armourers from the country participated in the course, which aimed at strengthening the capacities of the trainees to improve stockpile safety and security in respect of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition.

B. Disarmament advocacy programme

Weapons of mass destruction

38. The Regional Centre, in cooperation with the Verification, Research, Training and Information Centre, provided legal assistance to Ecuador in June 2012, which contributed to the establishment in January 2013 of a national authority responsible for the implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction and Security Council resolution 1540 (2004).

39. The Regional Centre and the Verification, Research, Training and Information Centre also collaborated in assisting Colombia in its implementation of the Convention at a seminar held in Bogota in February 2013. The Regional Centre supported the Implementation Support Unit within the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs in providing technical and legal assistance in the drafting of national legislation related to the Convention. After the seminar, an informal working group was set up to examine the establishment of a national authority responsible for monitoring and promoting national implementation of the Convention.

40. The Regional Centre undertook outreach activities in the form of seminars and presentations at the request of several universities and diplomatic academies in the region. Topics discussed included nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, the Nuclear Security Summit process, the United Nations disarmament machinery and existing legal instruments related to weapons of mass destruction.

Linking of security and disarmament matters to the United Nations agenda

41. The Regional Centre also participated, through a live webcast, in a Model United Nations workshop organized in May 2013 by the United Nations Information Centre in Mexico and provided information on multilateral disarmament machinery and processes and on key issues on the disarmament agenda of the United Nations.

Implementation of General Assembly resolution 65/69 on women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control

42. During an event organized by Trinidad and Tobago on women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, held on the margins of the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly, the Regional Centre presented its publication on promoting women as forces of change in the combat against the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons. The publication, which featured the experiences and knowledge of a diverse group of women from the security sector and civil society organizations in the implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, was well received.

IV. Staffing and finance

A. Finances

43. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 41/60 J, the Regional Centre was established on the basis of existing resources and voluntary contributions made by Member States and interested organizations for its operation and substantive programmes. During the reporting period, voluntary contributions to the Trust Fund for the Centre were received in the amount of $2,624,048. The Secretary-General wishes to thank the Governments of Australia, Argentina, Canada, Finland, Germany, Guyana, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Spain, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America, as well as the Organization of American States, for their generous contributions, which were critical in enabling the Centre to fulfil the mandate entrusted to it by the Assembly.

44. The Secretary-General reiterates his call to Member States, including those of the region, to make financial contributions to the Regional Centre.

45. The Regional Centre also benefited from close cooperation and joint undertakings with key partners, such as the Andean Community, the Central American Programme on Small Arms Control, UNDP and the Verification, Research, Training and Information Centre. The partners provided the Regional Centre with both in-kind and financial contributions, as well as cost-sharing agreements, which greatly assisted in the implementation of its activities.

46. The Secretary-General wishes to thank the Government of Peru, the host country of the Regional Centre, for its support, including its annual contribution, and calls upon Peru to continue to provide the necessary financial support to the Centre in order to offset the rise in its operating costs.

47. Information on the status of the Trust Fund for the Centre for 2012 is contained in the annex to the present report.

B. Staffing

48. During the reporting period, the posts of the Director, one Political Affairs Officer and one financial/administrative support staff were financed through the regular budget. The Regional Centre continued to strengthen its team of small arms and light weapons experts through the hiring of legal advisers, forensic ballistics experts and armourers, thus enabling it to expand its technical assistance and support to the States of the region.

V. Conclusion

49. During the reporting period, the Centre undertook more than 70 substantive activities in the field of public security and disarmament advocacy. It also received more than 30 requests for assistance from Member States and partners focusing primarily on the control of small arms and light weapons.

50. The Regional Centre provided technical assistance to Member States through its integrated approach to combating illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons throughout the region, including technical assistance in weapons destruction and stockpile management; capacity-building and training for law enforcement personnel and legal practitioners on combating illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons; legal assistance and policy support on arms control; and disarmament advocacy for comprehensive responses to disarmament and proliferation challenges. Likewise, the Centre expanded assistance to States by providing practical tools to strengthen State capacities for standardized tracing, marking and armoury management, with a view to assisting States in the region in their implementation of international and regional instruments regarding small arms and light weapons.

51. Member States, United Nations partners and regional organizations recognized the quality of assistance provided by the Regional Centre, which contributed to reducing the circulation of illicit small arms and light weapons and their ammunition in the region.

52. The Secretary-General calls upon Member States, especially those from the region and other partners in a position to do so, to provide the Regional Centre with the necessary financial and in-kind support to ensure that the Centre is able to carry out its mandate effectively and serve the needs of Member States in the region.

Annex

Status of the Trust Fund for the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean for 2012

(United States dollars)

Reserves and fund balance, 1 January 2012	**2 073 782**
Income, 1 January-31 December 2012	
Voluntary contributions	2 624 048[a]
Interest income	14 273
Other/miscellaneous income	142 739[b]
Total income	**2 781 060**
Expenditures	2 125 922
Programme support costs	276 370
Refunds to donors	164 702[c]
Total expenditures and refunds	**2 566 994**
Reserves and fund balance, 31 December 2012	**2 287 848**[d]

[a] Contributions totalling $2,624,048 were received from Australia ($20,000), Canada ($139,759), Finland ($50,000), Germany ($281,283), Guyana ($1,009), Mexico ($5,000), New Zealand ($51,318), the Organization of American States ($55,000), Peru ($30,000), Spain ($19,019), and the United States of America ($1,971,660).

[b] Includes cancellations of prior-period obligations of $126,309, related programme support cost adjustments of $16,420 and miscellaneous income in the amount of $10.00.

[c] Represents refund to the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency.

[d] Consists of reserves and fund balance, 1 January 2012, plus income received in 2012, less expenditures incurred and refunds made during the year. The information is based on the statement of income and expenditure for 2012. During the period 1 January to 22 May 2013, additional contributions totalling $286,316 were received from the United States of America ($233,816), and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland ($52,500).